

To Kill A King

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Summary: The War is Over and peace with the Elites is on the horizon, but humanity holds a deep hatred for the former military leaders of the Covenant. A young couple and their Dog Rex spearhead a terrorist movement to end the union of Elite and Humanity.

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Part 1 of 3: **Cloak and Dagger**

"I've been waiting for you." A man stated from the shadows. A burning cigar outlined his face as he took a long drag on the sweet smelling tobacco. The man pulled the cigar from his lips and blew out the thin smoke. He stepped into the light as a younger man nervously looked around to see if they were alone. "Don't worry, kid. We're alone." The man reassured his business partner.

"One can only be too cautious," the younger man stated as he held up a briefcase. A rumble of thunder filled the night air, as if throwing a sense of caution into an already nerve wracking meeting. The young man took a deep breath as he motioned to give the older man the briefcase.

The older man smiled as he adjusted his full length coat, perhaps in preparation of the upcoming storm. "Put it on the ground and open it."

The young man obliged. He knelt down with the suitcase, keyed in the combination and popped the lock. The case opened with the snap of its locking hinges and the young man spun the case to present the contents to the older man. The older man smiled, reassured that his cargo was indeed present. He placed his cigar back to his lips, opened his lighter and gave the cigar a much needed relighting. A quick puff and he nodded to the young man; content with receiving the

goods within the case. The young man closed the case and locked it.

"What's the first three numbers of the combo?" The old man asked.

"One, one, seven." The young man softly stated as he stood and handed the case over.

The old man chuckled. "A bit sentimental, aren't ya?" He laughed as he took the case.

"He's my hero. He should be yours as well." The young man stated as a few drops of rain began to fall.

"Sorry, kid. I don't believe in ghosts." The man stated as he turned away.

The young man questioned, "what do you believe in?"

"Credits." The old man stated as he approached a nearby car. He climbed into the back of the four door vehicle and closed the door.

The old man sat down and closed the door as his cigar smoke began to fill the car. In the back seat with him was another older man; a black man wearing a clean cut suit. The old man gave the man the suitcase and put out his cigar; stowing it away in a metal pocket case.

"Did he give you the first three digits?" The black man questioned.

"Yup. One, one, seven." He laughed.

"Why is that funny?" The black man remarked as he turned the first three digits.

"Kid believes in the Spartan legend. You know, the one that died to save the world."

"I don't find that funny." The black man stated as he opened his personal data pad and retrieved the fourth number. He keyed in the digit that had been given to him by his contact and then opened the case.

Several yards away from the car stood the young man. Rain was now falling heavier and he adjusted his coat to keep the rain from drenching too deep on his clothes underneath. He watched the tinted windows of the car, as it sat motionless on the side of the road. He lowered his head and began to walk away. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his chatter communicator. He dialed a number and the chatter began to ring.

A voice on the other end replied, "hello?"

The young man replied, "just a minute, sir." He then continued to walk as the car with the men exploded in a puff of red and orange. The muffled explosion was nearly silent, but powerful enough to kill anyone within the six feet of the car. The windows split and the

frame bobbed from the explosion. The young man then replied, "Mr. Drake and Senator Rimo have been eliminated. Also a possible driver of the vehicle may also have been a casualty."

"Good work. We will make contact with you in ten days." The voice stated as the line clicked off.

The young man dropped his chatter communicator into a nearby trash can and walked away. He pulled his collar closer to his neck as the rain became stronger. It had been another long group of weeks, meeting with alien sympathizers and those that supported the unstable Human and Sangheili alliance. He had been looking to meet with the black man know only as Mr. Drake, but found that it was impossible to get close to him. The only way he could affectively complete his mission was to give Mr. Drake something that he wanted. After a week of talking with Senator Rimo, the old man that favored Sweet Williams cigars, he had found out that Mr. Drake was looking to gather information on ONI Agents that had been sent to Sanghiliios to further bring stability to the Human-Sangheili alliance.

"Damn sympathizers!" The young man growled as he thought back to all the pain the elites had caused humanity. "We don't need their help!" He fumed softly to himself.

David never liked the idea of peace. When the war against the Covenant ended, and humanity was free to leave the relative safety of the underground shelters, he immediately answered the call of the UEG and the UNSC. The war had cost humanity a great deal of lives, and more then anything the military and the government needed able bodied men and woman to fill in the void and help rebuild the military structure of leadership.

David easily qualified for the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) because of his degree in Advanced Artificial Intelligence from MIT. And when he found out that there was negotiations being held to establish a peaceful relation with the elites he protested secretly; along with nearly a third of humanities remaining populace. What he didn't expect was the massive Marine support of the initiative. The Marines had fought side by side with the elites during the last stages of the war, especially those that had survived the trip to Halo Installation 00, and had learned a great deal from the elites they worked with during those last days. To think that the elites, a killing force that slaughtered humanity for the better part of twenty-seven years, was now a supported ally was making a lot of humans utterly sick. David was no exception.

David's family lived on Troy, his brother died during the battle on Reach, and his grandfather was one of the United Nation Space Commands (UNSC) ship captains during the first days of the Earth Campaign. His ship was shot down when the Prophet of Regret first broke through the Magnetic Accelerator Cannon (MAC) platform defense web. David never had a chance to say goodbye to any of his family members.

"I was stuck here, on Earth getting my degree from MIT." He had said to the interview committee that existed within his section of ONI. They wanted people they could trust; people who would help humanity understand that they didn't want the elites by their side. "I hate them. I hate them all! If I wasn't on Earth I could have stayed with my brother and joined the Marines!" He wept during his interview. "I

could have fought those elite bastards on Reach and made them pay for what they did."

David remembered that interview so vividly. It was the most honest and true he had ever been in his life. He never imagined the group would turn to terrorists' acts, but no one would ever suspect that the actions would come from within ONI. Indeed, he was killing his own people, but these same people refused to listen when they were asked, no, told that they needed to no longer support the peace movement.

They deserved to die.

David walked into his clean and barren apartment. His tiny Welsh Corgi waddled from another room panting happily as he entered.

"Hey Rex." David said as he knelt down and rubbed the dog happily. David took off his coat and hung it on a coat rack on the back of his door so that it would dry. He then walked into the only room that had furniture. On one side of the room was a desk with several data pads and a Personal Computer. On the other side was a couch facing a wall and a fireplace at its side. On the couch sat a woman with a data pad in her hands.

"How did it go?" She asked as Rex returned to her side and then happily jumped into the chair with her. She never pulled down the data pad; reading the days news. She placed a hand to the dogs head as it laid its head on her lap.

"They didn't contact you?" David questioned.

"Why should they? They know we live together." She replied. "Anything I need to know about you, I can get from you."

"They're done." David stated, letting her know that he had indeed killed his targets.

"Good." She stated. She pressed a button on the data pad and the screen changed to the sports section. "Rex is hungry and I forgot to pick up food for him."

"He can eat scraps tonight." David replied as he sat down at his desk.

"It's not healthy for him." She replied, running her finger along Rex's golden head.

David tapped his hand on his desk and the outline of a keyboard appeared. "One night won't hurt him. I'll get his food tomorrow morning after my run." David scanned his email inbox as the woman stood from the couch and walked toward his desk. She was wearing a button down shirt with matching dress pants. Her dark brown hair was tied up and back, and her glasses rested loosely on the tip of her nose. David loved her more then anything.

She was also his boss in ONI Section 2.

"We have a new assignment." She said as she stood behind David. She placed her hands on his shoulder and began to massage them tenderly. "It just came a few hours ago."

"I thought they said ten days?" David scanned his inbox and then noticed the redirected header that indicated an encrypted message. He unlocked the folder with his sixteen digit password, decoded the message with top of the line software and then gasped as he read the first line.

"Target 221- Warning sent - no change - eliminate target 221 - nameâ€¦." David paused. "Are they nuts?" He stated as he stood from his desk.

"No they aren't." She replied, attempting to calm his nerves. She gently lowered David back to his seat, wrapped her arms around his head and placed her cheek against the side of his head. "We're working together on this one, along with two other teams."

"It'll take more then six people to do this!" David sighed. He read the file one last time, knowing that it was a self degrading document. In ten seconds it would delete itself once it was opened.

"Target 221- Warning sent - no change - eliminate target 221 - name: Sir Terrance Hood." David watched as the file vanished from his screen and then it vanished from his inbox. It was permanently deleted and unrecoverable. He leaned over his desk and sighed heavily as the woman tenderly held him in her arms. They each knew they couldn't talk about their jobs outside of ONI, because there was always the remote chance that they were being bugged or watched. But this, even to David's determination, was insane. "We can't do this, Rachel."

Rachel sighed, "It will be the ultimate proof in what is right and wrong." She pulled away from her lover and walked back to the couch. "This will force them to understand and finally listen."

"Thisâ€¦" David gestured to the deleted file, "will have the world hunting us down like animals!"

"But we'll make our point!" Rachel commented. "I don't like it either, but we knew that each step would take us further up the ladder."

David leaned back in his chair, and rubbed his temples as Rachel stared at him from across the room. Killing Lord Hood was like attempting to assassinate the president of the UEG. No, it was worse then even that. Ever since his group went into action using lethal force, the UNSC had been protecting all major elite sympathizers around the world and off world. Lord Hood, the military admiral that had led the human forces to victory against the Flood and the Covenant, was never without his guards. And it wasn't as if he needed them. Hood was a skilled marksman, swordsman, and had countless years of military combat training in his head. Not only that, but in his youth he was considered a master of hand to hand combat. His age may have slowed him down, but he was not going to be a push over.

David looked up at Rachel's eyes. She was putting up a good feat of bravo in saying she wanted to take on this target, but now that he was looking at her he could tell she was scared. David's concern wasn't making it easier for her to be strong. David took a breath. "In the morning, setup a meeting with the others, option B location.

We'll pull this together and we'll take our time. This one isn't going to be easy."

Rachel nodded and smiled at her lover. She then looked to the couch as Rex moaned in a hungry sigh. "Rex is really hungry."

"He's not the only one." David added as he stood. He powered off his computer and then looked to Rachel. "I don't think we should wait till morning to feed him. Let's go to the store now. We could use the fresh air."

Rachel and David arrived on the lower floor of their apartment building and looked out into the rain filled night. Rachel cupped her arm into David's and smiled lovingly. They needed to get out of the apartment so they could clear their heads. It wasn't everyday that someone told you to assassinate the leader of the worlds military force.

As they approached the glass door leading to the street, Rachel noticed two men standing to the side of the lobby. They were both reading data pads and acting casual. ONI spooks, but she wasn't sure which section. Who ever they were, they were terrible at attempting to blend in. David noticed them as well.

One of the men approached Rachel and David. "David Rawls and Rachel Simpson?"

"Yes?" David stated.

The man nodded to his partner and then flashed a badge. "You two are under arrest."

"What charges?" Rachel stormed.

"Murder, assault, terrorism, assassination," the man stated as he pulled up a side arm up, "pick one."

The man's badge read ONI but it was an older design. All ONI Personal had to change their badges on a monthly, random, rollout which was forced by the central office. These men were obviously not ONI, but she had to be sure. "I want to see both of your badges." She ordered.

The second man obliged by showing his badge as well, it was the same; an older layout which was at least three months old. Rachel acted first. The man never saw her long and toned legs swing, but before he knew what had happened his gun was flipping in the air and his hand was stinging from the kick. David had already subdued the second man with a hidden knife to the throat. His gag and gasps caught the first man off guard.

He looked at Rachel and David with a stare of amazement. "You're not ONI."

Neither David nor Rachel replied. Rachel cupped the man's head from behind, and quickly snapped his neck. They both grabbed a body and dragged them outside. Luckily no one was around to witness their deed. They then hid the bodies in a nearby dumpster.

"Trash gets picked up tomorrow morning." Rachel said.

"Whoever sent them will be expecting them to report in before that." David added. "Let's get Rex's food and get out of here. It's time to move again."

In the three years since the end of the Covenant-Flood War, humanity split. Those who supported the alliance with the elites and those that didn't. The result created a faction known roughly as "The Shield". They operated within ONI, but there was no proof of who belonged to the super secret organization. It was rumored that the group had less than twenty members, but their skills of espionage and intelligence made them fearful. They wanted one thing, the abandonment of all plans to make peace with the alien worlds that split from the Covenant.

The Shield was a self trained group with varying degrees of expertise. And although they believed what they were doing was for the better of human kind, they were simply called murderers, killers, terrorist and, more directly, assassins.

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Part 2 of 3: **Sing Little Caged Bird**

Rachel held her head as high as she could and braced for the blow. Her head snapped to the side as the man's fist collided with her head. Blood from a previous hit flew from her jaw as her head rocked to the side. The plastic cuffs on her hands held her in the chair as the man that punched her lifted her head in glared into her swelling eyes.

"It doesn't have to be this way." The man said sternly. "You'll go to prison for few years, but at least you'll be alive." The man let Rachel's head go as he walked out of the spot light that sat over Rachel's restrained position.

Rachel could barely think straight, blood dripped down her face and onto her shirt and pants. How many times had he hit her? She lost count after ten. She moved her tongue around and felt a lose tooth. She spat it out in a pack of blood and saliva.

"Give us the names of everyone who was on your team." A man in the shadows stated. His voice was different then the man that had beat her. Through a swollen eye Rachel turned her head in the direction of the voice and tried to see who it was. The spotlight swinging overhead made that impossible. "We don't like doing this, but you aren't making this any easier on yourself. Who else was on your team?"

A thought crossed Rachel's mind. Was she truly ready to die for this? She thought back to the plan. She and David had spent the better part of three weeks putting it together with the others, and they thought it was fool proof.

Looks like she was the fool.

It all started three weeks ago, the day after the fake ONI spooks showed up at her and David's apartment. Rachel knew something wasn't right at that moment. Number one thing on her mind was who sent the men after them? Number two topic was why they brandished ONI

identification cards? And the last thing was how they knew exactly where their apartment was?

Her mind glazed over to that next morning. Sleeping in the hotel bed wasn't comfortable, but it was better than worrying about a flock of men bursting through the door with assault rifles. David had stayed up all night watching the doors and windows, and thinking about the three questions Rachel had raised.

"I think it was the Marines, or the UEG Secret Service." David stated as Rachel sat up from her hard sleep. Rex lay next to her silently resting.

"The SS was cut up last year." Rachel moaned as she stretched. "There wasn't enough funding to keep them together. The UEG requested more funding but the UNSC denied it. I think it was another Military faction."

"Section 3 perhaps?" David questioned. "Giving their men fake IDs to throw us off?"

"No, Section 3 wouldn't send untrained spooks to get us. They'd use the Black Ops in a situation like that."

"Then who?" David sighed as he lay on the bed beside Rachel. "It couldn't be Section 1. They're just a bunch of paper pushers, but they do control the funding for all groups. They are involved in nearly everything. They just don't question where the money goes."

"I think we should worry more about how they found us." Rachel added. She stood from the bed and pulled on her pants from the prior night. A quick saunter into the bathroom and she started to clean up. "They knew us by name, and location. They even knew what we've been up to." She shouted back to David.

The rest of the day was a combination of guessing and contacting the rest of the team. The meeting with the team went as planned; there were no discussions about the target or how they would achieve the objective. The only thing on their mind was getting to know one another, learning each others traits, and establishing a team leader. Rachel, as always, won that role.

The next series of meetings were more focused. Securing their meeting hall was a bit of a challenge. They needed to make sure it wasn't bugged and that there weren't going to be any interruptions. They found a decent location in Europe that was easily remote, but within driving range of supplies. Even Rex became the team playful mascot whenever they met. Rex was always with David and Rachel until they actually had to go into action. Three weeks came and went, and finally Rachel felt her team was ready.

She thought they were truly ready.

The day came for the plan to unfold. Rachel did her duty. Using her day job handle as an ONI Section 2 intelligence operative, she boarded the shuttle that would lead her directly to the unveiling of the Ark. Lord Hood had finally lifted the veil of secrecy surrounding the Ark Portal Generator and made it openly available for Civilian viewing. No one could enter the Ark, but there was no longer a need

to hide it. For the last three years the entire area was locked down. After the unveiling, Hood would return to High Command for a series of meetings. During his transit back to HighCOM was when Rachel's team planned to strike.

The public unveiling of the Ark Portal Generator went off with an uproar of cheers from civilians that had learned to embrace their Forerunner history. Reclaimer this and Forerunner that; it was the new craze sweeping the world. Even off world colonies that were slowly rebuilding had begun to embrace the lost Forerunner technology. Once the Ark Portal Generator was unveiled humanity embraced the Forerunner lore even more than before. The crowd spanned all sides of the Ark and Rachel made sure she was as far away from Hood as possible. Massive holo screens, scattered around the Ark, showed high ranking UEG and UNSC officials speaking to the crowded onlookers that were too far away to see them. Later in the video broadcasted speeches, the idea of sharing knowledge with the Elites became the main topic. Rachel had no desire to listen so she quietly left the celebration. It wasn't until few moments later that she realized how big of mistake that was.

"Excuse me ma'am." A man stated as he walked up to Rachel. She stopped and turned to see that it was a marine in full formal wear. He removed his hat before speaking. "I happened to notice that you were here alone. It's such a wonderful event that I didn't think it fare for you to experience it by yourself. Would like a drink?"

The man was older, highly decorated and charming, but he was also an unneeded temptation. After all, Rachel was only a woman. She loved David, but she knew a good thing when her eyes saw it. "Thank you, but I really must be going. I have work to do."

"This is a world holiday." The man countered with a smile. "Nobody works today." Rachel smiled and held up her ONI Badge. "Oh." The man laughed. "The Office of Naval Intelligence. Sorry to hear that. You are the unfortunate minority on this planet." He leaned closer and looked at the name on the card, "Miss Wilson."

Rachel knew that her name had been comprised, so an alias was needed. "Patricia Wilson." She extended a hand and the marine graciously kissed it.

He looked up as he released her hand. "Funny, because you remind me a lot of Rachel Simpson." The man's smile quickly faded. Rachel held her smile, though her heart dropped into her stomach.

"I don't think I follow." She forced a straight face as her eyes picked up movement at her side. She had been flanked by another marine. She watched as the older man that had so swiftly charmed her unfastened the buckle on his side arm, but did not draw.

"Come with us, ma'am." The man stated more sternly. "We will shoot if you refuse."

That was the end of her operation. She couldn't fight back. Marines were everywhere and she never figured they would single her out amongst a crowd of millions. Her location was remote, she wasn't even near Hoods platform in Voi, she had stayed on the New Mombasa side of the Ark Generator; nearly ten miles from where Hood was making his speech.

The marines carried her to a warthog and drove off. They took everything from her except her glasses, and thankfully that was her means of communication. She faked as though she was adjusting her glasses, but actually she pressed a button that signaled her team with a preset order; "Abort".

After three hours of driving, and two hours of being hit on by single Marines who didn't know why she was being arrested, she was dragged into a closed building on a distant airstrip in Mombasa. The next few minutes were a mixture of interviews and idle threats to her life. But nothing was worse than the man who walked into the room and hit her full force with the stock of his pistol. Rachel went unconscious from the blow and awoke in the dark room, cuffed to a chair and blinded by an overhead light.

"I'll ask you one last time, Rachel," the man stated, pulling Rachel back to the present moment, "who else is on your team?"

Rachel quickly pondered if this was worth dieing for, and then she thought of David. She smiled. "Huey, Duey and Luey." She laughed as her swollen face began to tingle with the effort of smiling.

The man that had stepped into the light sighed heavily and then turned to the darkness. Another man's voice echoed, "We're done here."

Rachel thought back on how she wished she and David had more time together. She raised her swollen eyes and smiled as the marine pulled out his M6 pistol and placed it to her forehead. She never had the chance to say goodbye to David or Rex.

Rachel stated directly. "They killed billions of us. They burned our worlds. And you want to make nice with them? They aren't human! They don't bleed like we do! They don't give a damn about us!"

The man flipped off his safety and huffed. "When the flood landed in Voi, three elites dragged me out of the city and protected me from a swarm of Flood infection forms. All you did was hide in the bunkers and pray for someone to save you. The elites came. They came when we needed them the most and they died fighting just as we did. But you wouldn't understand that. You don't even care that the elites are doing everything they can to make amends for what they've done. For what they were forced to do! You don't care because you refuse to care. And people like you will never change."

"I lost my father because of them!" Rachel screamed.

"I lost my wife!" The man countered. "But being a soldier means following orders, and that was what they did! I can't hate them any more than I can hate myself for what I was forced to do when we captured elite and grunt survivors."

"Sergeant!" The man in the shadow snapped. "She won't break. Put her down and move to the next target."

The marine flipped on his safety, his idle threat to kill her didn't work. He turned the gun over to its stock and slapped it across Rachel head. She blacked out instantly.

The marine wiped the blood from his gun, walked out of the room and into another room at the end of a long hall. The other men that sat in the shadows of Rachel's interrogation followed him. They were a mixture of Commissioned Marine officers and ONI personal. The door opened into a pitch black room. The light in the center of the room turned on and the door closed behind the group. Under the light sat a cuffed young man sitting in a chair. He lifted his head and squinted in the blinding light.

The Marine Sergeant stepped forward into the light and smiled at the young man. He knelt down to face level and said, "I just spent the better part of the afternoon beating the crap out of your girlfriend. She's dead now. I put the bullet in her myself." David growled in a mixture of anger, sadness, and rage, but he couldn't free himself from his bonds. The sergeant cut into his tirade. "Now kid. You tell me everything she didn't. Who was on your team, and which one of you shot Lord Hood?"

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Part 3 of 3: **Stand Alone Complex**

David stood on the edge of a massive cliff, and at the base of the cliff rested the eerie device known only as the Ark Portal Generator. The wind kicked up as an image of Lord Hood floated several yards away. Hood was speaking about peace, and tranquility for all of humanity, and something else about Sangheili and alien relations, but David didn't care about that. A crowd of several thousand people stood near him, all cheering after Hood finished speaking nonsense about returning to space and joining hands with the Sangheili, the Unggoy, and a localized colony of Huragok.

David bit his lip; fought back the urge to scream in protest of such a worthless idea. He adjusted the receiver in his ear as he turned away from the North Eastern Ark Portal Observatory Deck. His little Welsh Corgi, Rex, happily waddled at his side. He pushed his way through the crowd and walked up to a nearby mobile food cart.

"A beer." David asked as he reached for his wallet.

"What brand?" The owner asked.

"Whatever's cheap and cold."

The man gave David the first thing he grabbed and David quickly paid the man. He then turned and sipped the cold bitter flavor.

His COMM blipped, "Abort," and then died. It was Rachel's voice; her prerecorded warning.

He walked away from the crowd as Hoods voice boomed in the background. He adjusted his shirt collar and contacted another team member. Speaking into the top of his shirt he said, "Did you copy that?"

"Yeah, I did." The man replied. "The gig is up. We need to pull out."

"We may not get another shot." David swayed. As much as he was against the idea of killing Lord Hood, he was certain that this would

be the best chance the Shield would ever get of ending the peace talks.

"Op leader said 'abort' on the emergency frequency. That means she's been flagged or even worse, they grabbed her. Chances are they're looking for all of us directly. There is a spy in our group and I am not sticking around to find out who it is. You and Rex need to get while you can. Good luck." The COMM died. David could only imagine that the rest of the group was thinking the same thing.

"Is anyone staying?" He asked to the other three team members. No one responded. David pulled the small communication's device from his ear and tossed it into the trash. He then walked into a portal restroom facility and began to apply a disguise; a quick wig and glasses that he had planned to use after he took the shot at Hood. The whole plan needed to be scrubbed, and everyone bailed. Of all the members in the Shield, he didn't think that his group would be scared off so easily. But it didn't help matters when the team found out that someone knew who Rachel and David were.

David walked out of the restroom, Rex waited patiently at the door, and made his way to the parking garage. Unlike the rest of the team, he had purchased a room in a nearby town and rented a car. David walked with haste but tried to make it seem as casual as possible. He kept his eyes open for ONI spooks and Marines or UNSC personal in general. He gave all crowds wide births, but stayed away from posted cameras overlooking the crowds. After a few minutes he relaxed into his car, Rex hopped into the back, and turned on his secondary radio.

"Sir, do you copy?" He softly questioned into the line.

"What happened? You aren't supposed to contact me until after the target was taken care of."

"We had to abort. Our team leader was grabbed but we don't know who." David stated. He cautiously looked into all of his mirrors to make sure no one was sneaking up on his car. He put the vehicle into auto drive and set the course for the hotel. The vehicle powered up and slowly began to pull out of the garage.

"Very well. We should have known that security would be too tight around this target. We got to aggressive."

"Agreed, sir." David huffed; he had known that from the beginning of the operation.

"Contact the others and get back to your fall back position in England. Get out of Africa. I'll meet you all there.."

David remained silent.

"Did you copy that?" The man replied on the line.

David hung up, rolled down the window and tossed the COMM out. It was a setup. The head of the group never gave direct location names over the line, and he didn't meet with them either. Had this been setup from the beginning? David rubbed his chin as his stomach began to do flips.

"Ten days!" David shouted. His last time speaking with the director was after killing Mr. Drake and Senator Rimo. The director said he would contact him in ten days, but only an hour later he had received the operation to take out Lord Hood. Had the Shield been compromised?

David's ears began to hum loudly as a distant roar of a powerful engine echoed outside his car. He looked in the rearview mirror as three warthogs and two Hornets began to bear down on him.

The Marines had arrived.

"Pull over!" Came a shout from a bull horn.

David gripped the steering wheel. "Manual control!" He shouted to the cars onboard computer. The steering wheel suddenly responded to David's every touch and he floored the accelerator. The small rental car pulled ahead of the much slower warthogs but the airborne hornets kept pace.

David turned several curves at high speeds, swerved through traffic, and hopped several speed bumps. The tiny electric engine in his car whirled loudly, and he knew the batteries would not hold out for long at these speeds, and then there were the snipers on the side of the Hornets. David imagined a marine with a heat signature body lock on him. The man's iron will would be to send an accelerated round through the back of David's head. He couldn't outrun the hornets, and he couldn't outrun the sniper's steady computer aided eyes.

He swerved randomly from side to side; every inch counted to prevent the sniper rifles target lock from tracking him. And then, as if a blessing from God, David swerved into another parking garage. The overhead levels would help keep the hornets at bay, and give David time to escape on foot. It was mid day in a populated new city, it would be easy to blend in with the crowd.

He parked the car naturally, opened the door looked at Rex. "Sorry boy, you stay!" He turned and crawled along the sides of other cars. He ducked into a stairway and then emerged on an upper level where there was an exit to the street and a thick crowd of pedestrians. He took one step forward as a high pitched whir filled his ear. He turned and saw a small disk floating several feet behind him. It was an ARGUS drone. The tiny disk with a single propeller for a core had been tailing him the entire time. He had completely ignored the hum of its tiny engine as he ran, but in the silence of walking the sound became obviously clear.

There really was no escape.

The drone was the military's eyes and ears. David turned, prepared to run, and a loud zip split the air near his head. He looked down and there was a hole in the polycrrete floor in front of him. He took a step back and there was another supersonic round cutting into the garage floor behind him. David worked for ONI in the past three years, and he knew the power of the much discussed M99-B Stanchion Gauss-rifle. The round was accelerated through magnetic coils, could cut through three polycrrete buildings and still hit its target without varying by a millimeter. The sniper's warning shots were simply telling him to stay put.

David turned toward the floating Argus drone and glared at it. The tiny machine was most likely the sniper's eyes from outside the garage. David put his hands behind his head and knelt to the ground. If he ran the sniper would put a round through him and the garage, and David knew that his body would simply explode from the high velocity round as it cut through him; he would become a pile of spliced meaty flesh before he even realized he was hit.

The sound of marines' boots echoed up the garage pathway that David was just about to use as an exit. That was then followed by the soft clicks of Assault rifles' safeties flicking off as the men surrounded him.

David felt a knee spear into his back and he landed face first on the pavement, knocking his glasses off. A hand gripped his wrist and pulled to his arms back, and a plastic tie was secured to both of his hands. Someone then yanked his wig off as they dragged him away.

"Where was Rachel?" David questioned to himself. "Did she get away?" He wanted to ask the soldiers if they had captured a woman, but he dare not speak. It was true that Rachel had used her emergency signal to the team, but maybe she had eluded her pursuers. David was being hopeful, fearing that his lover had been grabbed.

The drive was long and enduring and David had no idea where they were taking him. The box like car that was transporting him had no windows in the back where they had stored him, and when they finally took him out of the vehicle they blindfolded him. He walked for a good distance and eventually arrived in a small square room with no windows and only one door. A camera sat in the upper corner but the overhead flood light quickly blinded David from seeing anything but himself, the chair he was cuffed to and the floor beneath him.

It felt like hours had passed before anyone came into the room. The door opened and the light turned off. David didn't have time to adjust his vision in the pitch black of the room, so he strained to see who had entered. He could only see silhouettes in the darkness; moving figures that almost melted into the walls of the room. And then the light came back on just as he was starting to get adjusted to the dark. A man walked into the light, he looked like an older Marine but David had no way of being sure.

The man knelt down in front of David and said, "I just spent the better part of the afternoon beating the crap out of your girlfriend. She's dead now. I put the bullet in her myself." David felt his heart die. He couldn't believe it, he didn't want to believe it, but his anger and sadness overwhelmed his logic. He screamed, cried, and yelled curses and threats at the man. The man's face was like stone as David released his tantrum but then the man added, "Now kid. You tell me everything she didn't. Who was on your team, and which one of you shot Lord Hood?"

David glared into the man's eyes. His team has scattered when; no one took a shot at Hood as far as he knew; unless there was another team.

The man added. "Seeing that you fled the scene, you probably didn't know. Someone killed Hood. We want everyone involved and we know that you weren't alone. Names, now!"

"I'll tell you after I'm dead." David smiled with tears flowing loosely down his face. Even if there was another team, he wanted to see Rachel. He didn't care about Hood anymore.

The man smirked and looked as though he wasn't surprised by the answer. "We'll start with your left foot, then your right and slowly work our way up. We'll cut each appendage off, heal the wound and keep on going. The pain is unreal, kid. You'll probably pass out after we start cutting off the second foot, but you'll still feel it. It'll be slow. Hell, I may even throw up, but I'll keep cutting and so will the next guy. The moment you give me names, we stop. In the beginning you'll try to be strong. You may even hold out until we get to your hands, but you will tell me names. You will tell me because pain is a lot scarier than death." The man stood with a sour glare in his eyes. He then pulled a rolling cart from the corner and picked up an old wood saw. The serrated teeth on the triangular metal blade reflected a glare of light into David's trembling eyes.

Water began to spray from the wall and onto the floor beneath David. David hadn't noticed the water drain beneath his seat. The man sighed heavily, "That's so that the blood doesn't pool up under you. And for the urine... cause eventually you're going to piss your pants." Another soldier walked out of the shadows and grabbed David's leg and began to pull off his boots. David kicked in retaliation but the men held him firm.

"Stop it!" David screamed and begged.

"Tell me names, David." The man replied as he tied David's leg to the chair. He placed a strap around David's ankle and another under his knees. He then gripped the saw and without a show of hindrance he dug the teeth of the saw into David's ankle. Flesh ripped off from the first stab and tissue followed as he cut deeper. David cried out a blood curling scream as the saw dug into his ankle bone.

But David didn't talk, not then, but he didn't want to feel the pain anymore. There was no way he could not tell them everything they wanted to know.

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Lord Hood watched the young men and the lone woman lying on the tables of a large oval room. Various instruments were connected to their heads and several of them were twitching in response to the subconscious visions that filled their heads.

Hood removed his freshly cleaned hat and spoke casually to the man at his side, "Did we catch all of them?"

"We believe so, Sir?" The man in a white trench coat stated. "The one named David Rawls believes that his superiors were either caught or betrayed them. He is the closest to the truth and quiet possibly will be the first to crack. His pain tolerance just spiked, so he is most likely being tortured as we speak."

"How long before they all crack?" Hood questioned.

"It usually takes six days to of mental torment to crack them, but Rex is sure that he can make them talk in three days; maybe sooner if

David continues at this pace. We shall know how deep the Shield goes very soon."

"Rex." Hood stated as he walked near a holographic table.

The image of a happy Welch Corgi appeared on the table. His golden fur shined as his tail wagged happily. "Yes Sir." The tiny dogged mouthed.

"Send me a full spreadsheet of everyone involved in the Shield. Do not transmit that information to anyone but me. Understand?"

"Yes sir. You are worried that the Shield may have slipped into my interrogation facility. I fully understand your concern. I will handle the gathered data personally. May I have a treat?" Hood extended his hand onto the holo panel and moved his hand in a tossing fashion, but he tossed nothing. An image of a doggy treat appeared as if it was being thrown toward Rex and he caught it in his mouth, chewing it happily. "Thank you!"

Hood turned back to the glass window and looked at the rows of men and women that stretched before him on the tables. "Hard to believe they've experienced three weeks of their lives in less than two days."

The man in the white coat agreed. "Mr. Drake and Senator Rimo did a good job of gathering intelligence for us before they were killed. Poor bastards never knew what hit them, but if it were not for their sacrifice we would not have been able to catch the Shield's little fish. Now we have a chance of catching the leadership."

Hood pulled his hat back on. "I know we planted the idea of assassinating me, but at what point did we slip them into their dream states?"

"To them, the dream began when they first saw Rex within their normal lives. For example, in David Rawls the implanted dream state began when he came home and saw Rex waiting for him at the door. However, in reality there was no Rex. David went to bed a few moments after he came home. Made love with his female friend and then went to sleep. David and Rachel were captured the next morning, brought here and placed into the interrogation suite. Rex's image is the bridge modifier for the dream sequence away from what they all believe was reality. Rex is the unique combination to all of their dreams. Every Shield agent believes that Rex is their dog. Yet Rex, in reality, is only a forced figment of their dreams. He is snooping into their combined dream and gathering information about the Shield. He is a stand alone complex to their mental dream array."

Hood turned and walked away. "I have the Ark Portal Generator plans to see too. Make sure your guests are as comfortable as possible. The Shield must be taken down. No matter how much we frown upon the idea, humanity needs the elites and they need us. It's hard to believe that they would actually go through the process of assassinating me to prove how devoted they are to their cause." Hood stopped at the door leading out of the facility. "With them out of the way, we should be able to have the Ark festival without any fear. And Rex."

The little dog turned toward Hood and panted happily. "Yes sir?"

"Good boy. "

The end.

End
file.